

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSY-02 OMB-01 AGRE-00 EB-08
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R 071225Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8774
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP, PGOV, LS, CU
SUBJECT: CUBAN DIPLOMATIC MISSION VISITS LESOTHO

REF: MASERU 1180

1. ON SUNDAY, JUNE 4, THE FIVE-MAN CUBAN DELEGATION FROM MAPUTO ENDED ITS WEEK-LONG STAY IN MASERU. THE DELEGATION WAS LED BY CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO MOZAMBIQUE MARCISCO MARTIN MORA DIAZ AND REPORTEDLY INCLUDED SECOND SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS JOSE LEONARDO GALBAN DEL RIO; A SECRETARY RAUL ESPINOSA OLIVERA; AND AN INTERPRETER GILBERTO RONCE SANCHEZ. THE GROUP WAS ACCOMPANIED ON THE RETURN FLIGHT BY LESOTHO'S NEWLY-APPOINTED AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, MINISTER JOS. R. L. KOTSOKOANE, WHO SAID HE WAS ONLY GOING ALONG WITH THE CUBANS FOR THE RIDE IN ORDER TO ATTEND TO QUOTE OTHER BUSINESS UN-
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QUOTE IN MAPUTO.

2. THE VISIT OF THE CUBANS, WHICH PROMPTED WIDE (SOUTH AFRICAN) PRESS SPECULATION AND ABUNDANT RUMORS IN MASERU, WAS HANDLED WITH RESTRAINT BY THE GOL. ACCORDING TO LESOTHO RADIO, AN OFFICIAL RECEPTION WAS HOSTED BY THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE, THE DANISH CONSUL, KLAUS WULFF, AND EC DELEGATE DAVID ANDERSON ALSO

HOSTED RECEPTIONS FOR THE VISITORS. THE CUBANS WERE GIVEN THE USUAL GOVERNMENT TOUR TO VARIOUS AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL SITES. THE PRESS CONFERENCE PROMISED EARLIER (REFTEL) DID NOT MATERIALIZE.

3. MILITARY ASSISTANCE - ALTHOUGH THERE WERE PRESS REPORTS AND LOCAL SPECULATION THAT THE CUBANS ALSO VISITED QUOTE MILITARY UNQUOTE I.E., POLICE MOBILE UNIT INSTALLATIONS, EMBASSY HAS NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS.

ROC AMBASSADOR LIU, WHOSE COUNTRY PROVIDES FOUR POLICE ADVISES, HAS NO REPORT FROM HIS PEOPLE OF A CUBAN VISIT TO THE PMU. THE GOL HAS PUBLICLY DENIED THAT THE CUBAN MISSION HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH A LESOTHO REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. AMBASSADOR DIAZ WAS QUOTED AS SAYING QUOTE IT WOULD BE ALTOGETHER WRONG TO ASSUME THAT WE HAVE MILITARY AIMS UNQUOTE. HE REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO COMMENT WHEN ASK

ED ABOUT REPORTS THAT HE AND HIS PEOPLE HAD VISITED QUOTE MILITARY UNQUOTE INSTALLATIONS HERE.

4. DIPLOMATIC TIES - THERE HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN WIDESPREAD SPECULATION ABOUT THE POSSIBLE OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH CUBA AS A RESULT OF THE VISIT. NEITHER THE GOL NOR THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR DENIED THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS MIGHT BE OPENED. BOTH LENT SOME CREDENCE TO THE IDEA BY TALKING ABOUT QUOTE PROMOTING CLOSER LINKS UNQUOTE (DIAZ) AND SEEING WHETHER THERE WAS QUOTE ANY BASIS FOR ANY INCREASED RELATIONSHIP UNQUOTE (GOL FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL - REFTEL). IN FACT, HOWEVER, THE EMPHASIS IN COMMENT FROM THE CUBAN SIDE APPEARS TO HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE. THE GOC TRIED TO DOWNPLAY THE EXCEPTIONAL NATURE OF THE VISIT. THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS QUOTED AS HAVING SAID THAT IT SEEMED QUITE REASONABLE TO HIM THAT AS QUOTE MEMBERS OF THE NON-ALIGNED BLOC OF NATIONS AND AS DEVELOPING NATIONS UNQUOTE CUBA AND LESOTHO SHOULD CONSULT TOGETHER ON THEIR COMMON PROBLEMS AND ON SOLUTIONS TO THIRD WORLD PROBLEMS IN GENERAL. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY STATED THAT THIS IS NOT THE FIRST VISIT TO LESOTHO OF A DELEGATION FROM A COMMUNIST COUNTRY, POINTING OUT THAT A NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION VISITED LESOTHO LAST YEAR AND THAT THE GOL HAD ALSO HOSTED AN EAST GERMAN DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION TEAM.

5 SOUTH AFRICAN CONCERN - SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CONCERN OVER THE CUBAN VISIT IN LESOTHO WAS REFLECTED IN PRESS COMMENTARY. ANTICIPATING THIS AND LIKELY RESPONDING TO OFFICIAL EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN, FOREIGN MINISTER D.C. MOLAPO CANCELLED HIS PLANS TO ACCOMPANY THE CUBANS BACK TO MAPUTO AND WENT INSTEAD TO PRETORIA, REPORTEDLY TO REASSURE SAG FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA THAT THE CUBANS WERE NOT MOVING IN TO STAY. ONE PRESS REPORT INDICATED THAT THE CONVERSATIONS WERE PART OF A PERIODIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AND MAY HAVE COVERED MORE THAN THE CUBAN VISIT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MOLAPO INTER ALIA MAY HAVE SOUGHT SAG ASSURANCES THAT LESOTHO OPPOSITION

LEADERS IN EXILE (BCP LEADER MTSU MOKBEHLE ET AL) WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE FROM RSA AGAINST LESOTHO. THERE HAVE BEEN UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORTS THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WERE LENDING SUPPORT TO PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN'S EXILED OPPONENTS AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO LESOTHO'S PUGNACITY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA. ON MONDAY, FOLLOWING THE TALKS IN PRETORIA, FOREIGN MINISTER MOLAPO IS BELIEVED TO HAVE TRAVELED TO MAPUTO. HE HAS NOT YET RETURNED TO MASERU.

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R 071225Z JUN 78
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6. A. COMMENT: THERE ARE MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CUBAN VISIT TO MASERU AND IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE WE UNDERSTAND WHAT REALLY ROOK PLACE HERE AND WHY. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S CONSIDERED JUDGEMENT THAT THE VISIT WAS GINNED UP BY FOREIGN MINISTER MOLAPO AND POSSIBLY KOTSOKOANE WORKING WITH AND THROUGH AMBASSADOR SEFAKO IN MAPUTO AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY (PERMANENT SECRETARY T. MASHOLOGU, THE DEPUTY PERMSEC KONKA MOLAPO AND THE AFRICAN AFFAIRS DESK OFFICER TSELISO SEKANTSI (SP) WHO ARE SYMPATHETIC TO COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS AND MOVEMENTS, WHILE THE VISIT MUST ULTIMATELY HAVE HAD THE APPROVAL OF PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN, IT SEEMS OUT OF CHARACTER WITH HIS SOLID WESTERN ORIENTATION AND THE EMBASSY BELIEVES HE MAY HAVE BEEN PRESSURED INTO GIVING HIS AGREEMENT, PRESENTED WITH SOMETHING OF A FAIT ACCOMPLI OR SOLD A BILL OF GOODS BY

HIS MINISTERS. WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER HE GRANTED THE CUBANS AN AUDIENCE. THERE IS A STRONG LIKLIHOOD IN ANY EVENT THAT THE CUBAN VISIT AND RUMORS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE EVOKED PROTESTS FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE CHURCHES AND OTHER CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN LESOTHO.

B. EMBASSY BELIEVES REASONS SET FORTH PARA 5 REFTTEL PROBABLY WERE BASIC JUSTIFICATION FOR VISIT. THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT SCARE TACTICS WERE AIMED PARTICULARLY AT BRITISH WHO REPORTEDLY HAVE DECLINED TO PROVIDE LESOTHO A DESIRED LIST OF ARMAMENTS. EMBASSY WILL COMMENT FURTHER IN SEPTTEL.

C. REASONS FOR PRESENT VISIT OF MOLAPO AND KOTSOKOANE TO MAPUTO ARE NOT KNOWN. THERE ARE MANY POSSIBILITIES INCLUDING CONTINUING TALKS WITH THE CUBANS, DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE ON BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES (PARTICIPANT TRAVEL TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE IN MASERU NEXT MONTH, OAU MEETING, HAVANA NAM, ETC.)

D. FOR EMBASSY BRUSSELS: WE FIND IT ODD THAT EC DELEGATE DAVID ANDERSON EXTENDED HIS HOUSEHOLD HOSPITALITY TO THE CUBANS. IT WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO THIS EMBASSY TO KNOW WHAT THE REACTION OF EC BRUSSELS WOULD BE TO THIS GESTURE BY THEIR REPRESENTATIVE.
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